WRL News

ISSN: 0042-9791

No. 241 | The War Resisters League | March–April 1984

Resisting ASVAB

Military Testers Invade Bronx High School

by Larry Lynch

"I'm not going to be employed before high school. I'm not going to be employed after high school. So, what the fuck am I gonna take the army test for? I can't even read the fucking thing."

—Eddie, a young Puerto Rican dropout

Sometimes, you can get too comfortable. Sometimes, you get lazy, and trouble is waiting in your own backyard. It was waiting for me last Friday (January 27, 1984).

I am a teacher at James Monroe High School, The Bronx, New York City. I am a father and husband and a pacifist. During the last war, I was a conscientious objector. Achieving that status was only a Pyrrhic victory over the system. I grew up in a run-down section of Brooklyn and I was white. There were a dozen black or Hispanic kids to fill the quota for every white boy the draft board passed over.

I became a teacher, in part, because it was an easy way to be socially utilitarian, and at the same time to keep my hands clean. I could help kids, guide them and play counterpoint to an exploitative society. If this last idea sounds grandiose, I suppose it is. But I was convinced that an individual could make a difference. At first, the task was easy. I worked in alternative schools where one could find direct contact with kids and community. But later, I moved into the Board of Education where I could practice my specialty, working with learning disabled and emotionally troubled adolescents. The pay was good, too. It helped when we started to raise a family.

"How are the niglets, today?" a teacher asked me during my first month with the Board.

"Niglets?"

"Like piglets," he told me, "but little niggers. Niglets."

He did not know that I liked confrontation. Probably, he did not realize how much anger and potential violence some pacifists sublimate. But he found out.

Racism within the schools is usually more covert. It often surfaces under the guise of desiring more discipline, more structure, more of the traditional values that made America what it is. Even the President prefers to encode his racism behind catchwords like "crisis," "discipline," and "excellence."

When I arrived at Monroe five years ago, the student body was a very relaxed mix of Hispanic and Black kids with a fistful of whites. I worked as a crisis-intervention teacher for the special education unit. I was very proud of the work we did. The staff was experienced and caring. But a change started to take place a year and a half ago and at about that time we were given our third principal in two years.

We began to resemble a textbook example of what the President sees as a breakdown of order and discipline in school. Many staff retired or transferred. More than three hundred students left school in a 30-day period. Assault and robbery became commonplace. The situation boiled over when a predawn fire, set by vandals, completely destroyed the school library last December.

Teachers demanded, and received, a day to meet and come up with suggestions for restoring the school. For once, no punches were pulled. People were desperate enough to solve the problems together. The administration listened, allowed public statements, then promptly returned to the status quo. The school closed for Christmas.

When we reopened this January, the situation continued to degenerate. Groups of children roamed the hallways, openly defiant of the principal and his administrative staff. We hobbled through to the final exam period, when we knew we could enjoy a respite of five days of testing and two reorganization days which we could use to regroup, complete attendance reports, record keeping, book counts, and department conferences.

But the State Department of Education threw a monkey wrench in the works. Reorganization days would be cancelled and two school days would be added to the end of the term calendar. Some of the staff began to panic. Instructional programs were complete, books were collected, class and final test marks were in, and new programs would not be handed out for two days. "What do we do with the kids?" one dean asked, "Pray for snow? Or another fire?"

The administration had an answer. It would get around the State mandate by shortening the school day. That was something. But, what would be taught? There was an answer for that, too. On the first of the two days, January 31, 1984, teachers would take a change of pace and spend the day telling the students about ourselves and our hobbies, the little seen or understood side of ourselves that the students could share. "They'll enjoy finding out that teachers are people, too."

On February 1, the second day, all students would take the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) during homeroom. All teachers would administer the test, give new program cards to kids and send them home. The day would be over by 12:15 pm. Everyone would have a break. The armed services would correct the test. They would provide a busload of hall proctors who were active-duty marines and army personnel to keep order and protect the security of the test.

Any student who scored exceptionally high would be contacted by one or more branches of the armed services to explore the possibility of military career. But no student so contacted, was under any obligation to join.

The test would be given, Wednesday, February 1. I learned about it Friday afternoon, January 27. There was not much time to act. My friend, Ruben Gonzalez came screaming into my office.

"What do they think this is? Fucking Nazi Germany? This is a public school. These are my people. They don't give a shit about us when it comes to jobs or decent housing, but they'll grab off the best kids and con them into joining the fucking army. Maybe they need Spanish speaking marines to go into Nicaragua. Just let those motherfuckers come in here, just let them try!" He showed me a memo.

continued on page 3

WRL Runs Ad In *New York Times*

Is Reagan Going To Invade Central America?

The Nicaraguan government thinks so. So do a lot of other Central Americans. Paranoia? Since November the U.S. has had from 3,500 to 5,000 troops "on maneuvers" in Honduras, plus more in Panama, plus major naval task forces cruising off both coasts of Central America. Under the circumstances, wouldn't you worry?

Even more alarming is the continuous propaganda from Washington that pictures Cuba and Nicaragua -- and, potentially, El Salvador and Guatemala -- as threats to our national security. If this weren't so scary, it would be funny.

All four of these countries put together have about one-tenth the population of the U.S. They are dirt poor: their per capita income ($770/yr) is less than one-tenth of ours ($8,600/yr). They have no armaments industry to speak of, and not much industry of any kind. Cuba, the biggest of them, is so "powerful" that in 25 years it hasn't managed to get rid of a U.S. military base (Guantanamo Bay) on its own territory! And *they* are supposed to be threatening *us*?

We hear a lot of talk about the danger of a Cuban (or Soviet) military base in Nicaragua. There is no such base. There is no evidence that the Nicaraguan government *wants* such a base -- *or that the Cubans (or Soviets) could supply it unless the U.S. sat back and let them.* And a military base without regular supplies of food, fuel, munitions and equipment is no base at all.

Reagan has repeatedly said we must show the world how "tough" we are. He's even given us a demonstration of his toughness -- by invading Grenada (population 100,000). Is the next step to be an invasion of Nicaragua, or U.S. combat troops in El Salvador? We've seen the Soviets demonstrate *their* toughness in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan; is this the model we want our government to copy?

The civil war in El Salvador, mostly fought with U.S. arms and money, has already cost some 40,000 lives. Hundreds more are dying every week, most killed by the Salvadoran army, and the "death squads" -- the Salvadoran version of the Gestapo. How many thousands more Salvadoran lives -- as well as Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, and American -- does Reagan propose to sacrifice in the name of "toughness" or in the name of eliminating this trumped-up threat to our security?

- **We demand an end to U.S. maneuvers in and around Central America.**
- **We demand negotiations with Nicaragua -- *which the Nicaraguan government has asked for* -- to bring peace to Central America.**
- **We demand an end to all military and economic aid to El Salvador until the military repression ends and the death squads cease operations -- permanently.**

PEACE IS POSSIBLE -- IF WE MAKE IT POSSIBLE

Coalition For A New Foreign and Military Policy
Richard Healey, Director

Clergy & Laity Concerned
Rev. John Collins & Sr. Blaise Lupo, Co-directors

War Resisters League
Dr. Linnea Capps, Chairwoman

I support your efforts. Enclosed is ☐ $100 ☐ $50 ☐ $25 ☐ $_____ to help place this ad in other newspapers.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Make checks payable to War Resisters League. Contributions of $25 or more are tax-deductible if made to A.J. Muste Institute. Please mail all checks to Central America Peace Ad, 339 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10012.

This ad ran in the *New York Times'* "Week in Review" section on the Op Ed page on January 8, 1984. WRL coordinated the ad placement in response to a generous donor's wish that something be done to stop the imminent invasion of Central America. In this case, the action we took was a public outcry in one of the most prestigious newspapers in this country.

The date was chosen to just preceed the Kissinger Commission Report. This report was expected to "whitewash" the Central America conflict and lay the groundwork for more military aid by the U.S. The ad raised over $1,300 from contributors in 12 states and the District of Columbia. The money will be used for a future ad. It was wonderful how some individuals who had lost contact with the League over the years were pleasantly surprised to learn we still exist, have something to say, and are still fighting for peace and justice.

We also received angry and hostile comments, especially from the Cuban exile community. For the most part, we are seen as either communists or communist dupes as the following comment exemplifies, "Try to put the same ad in *Pravda* bastards. Drop dead dirty communists." Or, "Send this to Russia! Communism is slavery!" Yet, let it not be said we did not receive criticism from the left as well. The controversial point dealt with our comparison of the Soviet Union and the U.S. as equally manipulative and "tough," a position the League takes as an non-aligned organization building a non-aligned movement.

Though it did not raise as much money as we had hoped, all in all the Central America ad was quite successful. We encourage our membership and organizers to place this and similar ads in newspapers across the country. We must keep the pressure on the Reagan Administration. And this is one way we can do that.

WRL thanks Bob Claiborne for writing the copy; Bruce Barrett for typesetting and layout; and Milton Ost for placing the ad.

—Grace Hane Hedemann

WRL NEWS

Published by the War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012, 212-228-0450.

WRL is the U.S. branch of the War Resisters' International, a pacifist organization with affiliates in 18 countries.

Staff: Karl Bissinger
Ralph DiGia
Ed Hedemann
Grace Hane Hedemann
David McReynolds
Lisa Miller
Susan Pines
Igal Roodenko

WRL News (from 1967 on) is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Resisting ASVAB

continued from page 1

The testing would be in accordance with the mandates of "the Commissioner of Education of the City of New York." I smelled a rat. I was sure that such an office did not exist, but the title was sufficiently ambiguous to allow the administration leeway to do what it wished.

I was outraged too. But, I was also scared. There was no way I could ever give the test. I would have to protest the ASVAB publicly, knowing administrators can be vindictive. For some strange reason, my tenure papers were three months overdue and my union activities had already made me a target. I felt compromised and weighted down. Was I supposed to lie back and pass on my civil rights, my responsibility as a teacher, citizen, father?

So much for pondering, I would act. I would never administer the test. I decided to stop whoever was behind the testing even if it cost my job. I was exhilarated because I knew I was right; but I was also terribly depressed at the fear of losing my livelihood. Ruben and I were two. There were 91 other teachers to influence, and most would be out of the building within an hour.

* * * * *

We weren't alone. My friend Carol Bridges was with us. She felt the whole business was illegal and unconstitutional. And there was Mike Cooney, our union chapter chairman. He was already in action when we found him. He had prepared an alternative schedule for the ASVAB testing. I went with him to see the Principal, a young, pesky man with the physique of Tweedle Dee and the tenacity of a lamprey. "I'm busy. Everything is arranged. I am completely within my rights," he told us. There would be no alternative schedule, and the test would go on as planned. We should see the Assistant Principal for Guidance. She was not around.

"He thinks he's holding all the cards," Cooney said.

"Let's see if we can deal ourselves a better hand." We made plans to meet after our respective departmental meetings.

ASVAB was halfway down the meeting agenda. My chance came. I stated that the test was a violation of privacy and trust and I would refuse to give it. My chairman, who served in the Army Band, seemed genuinely surprised by the urgency of my insistence. Yes, he said, he would make my feelings part of the official record. He would include any statement I wished. A voice count showed that 14 of 21 teachers in the department were opposed to mandatory testing. But getting them to express their feelings in writing was another story. Most wavered. "Let's wait and see." They were frightened of reprisals. I was, too. But I had already stepped over the line. The die was cast. "If we're going to pay for this thing, we may as well enjoy it," Carol said, "Let's get started. There's a lot of work to do."

Carol, Mike, Ruben and I met in our office. We were outside the main arena. The only way we could alter the testing plan was to squeeze the Principal from the outside. We knew the Board and Chancellor could not risk public embarassment. The Principal must be isolated and pressured until he would relent. We were each powerless alone, but together, we were more than just four people. We pooled our resources. Carol had connections with the Friends, Coalition Against Militarism in Public Schools (CAMPS), and David Stoller who had stopped the ASVAB at Evander Childs High School last year. Mike would ask the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to apply pressure, but we could not expect much from a union with strong conservative ties. Ruben is a playwright. He would contact local parents, Puerto Rican artists, The Puerto Rican Educators Society and ASPIRA. I would start at the War Resisters League.

The four of us were determined. The situation was not as hopeless as we had at first imagined. We talked of sabotage in joking terms, but strangely enough, we all felt that because we were morally right, we would only achieve a good end by using pure means.

I drove down to the WRL after work. A young man told me that Ed Hedemann would see me shortly. I hoped for some kind of magic solution, a court injunction, the support of a powerful lobby that would slap down the testing. Ed tossed the whole business back into my lap. He taught me my first lesson, that we can only make a difference by accepting the responsibility for change as individuals. There were no magic formulas.

We were a study in contrasts. Ed was simple in wrinkled oxford and jeans while I tend to look like something of a fop. I immediately felt an added burden, that I must convince this man of my sincerity.

Ed was supportive, but distant and reasonable. I was white hot inside, and feeling very small and insignificant so far from the front. If we could shift the testing to a voluntary basis, he said, it may be a good opportunity to try to put in an alternative program. I told him I was afraid of being railroaded. He had some friends I could contact who may help. Jesus, I thought, this is another dead end.

I was wrong about Hedemann. His contacts made the vital difference between success and failure in the end. Over the next few days he would call me with suggestions, strategy and support. He wasn't such a bad guy after all.

I walked to Ruben's apartment on Third Street and started to phone. Sarah Wench of the Center for Constitutional Rights told me that there was a good chance that her collective would defend me if I refused to give the test and was fired. She did not get uptight over the fact that I did not have much money, either. She was a soothing influence on us. Sarah had me call Advocates for Children. Kathy Jarvis of the Advocates was better still: she was on our side. Actually, we were joining her side. She had been a children's rights advocate for years. Kathy said that I was the third teacher from Monroe to call her. There were more of us! She and David Stoller would draft a letter of protest to be hand-delivered to Chancellor Alvarado on Monday.

With her help, we would be able to apply pressure from the outside as well as the inside. Ruben called the poet and playwright, Pietro Petri whose son attends Monroe. Petri was angry. He would call the Board, he would let the Principal know where he stood, and urge his friends to do likewise. "Who are these motherfuckers think they are, playing games with our children's lives?" he asked Ruben. Some officers from Puerto Rican Educators Society reacted in similar fashion. There would be more pressure.

On Saturday, Brigid called to say Joan Nicholson of the Friends had been calling people all evening. She was willing to picket the school if necessary.

Mike called to say that George Altomare of the UFT had reached the Principal at home the night before. The UFT had no official policy on military presence in schools. But Altomare had suggested that forcing teachers to give the exam, and students to take it, may lead to an unnecessary and embarassing confrontation for the Principal. Altomare reported that the Principal was incredulous. "Who said it was mandatory?" Vasquez reportedly told him. "It's a voluntary test."

The walls were starting to crumble.

Ed called. A reporter from the *New York Times* may be interested in the story. The reporter was ironic. If I refused to give the test, he would be at Monroe on Wednesday to cover the story. If we reached a transactional solution, there would be no story. "For the sake of you and Ed and what you're trying to do, I hope there is no story. That's the way this business works. I won't get a story, but maybe you'll accomplish something more important."

I called Nat Hentoff of the *Village Voice*, but he didn't call back. So, by Sunday night, the sides were drawn among the adults. It was us, the Advocates for Children, CAMPS and a small group of parents against the Board of Education. We told ourselves it was no contest. We had yet to hear from the children. They would tilt the balance.

Our stock had fallen by Monday morning. Only nine teachers had signed our petition against ASVAB and the military presence. Some resented our leftist activities. Most were scared. A large number of temporary and probationary teachers wanted to sign,

continued on page 4

Resisting ASVAB

continued from page 3

but I asked them to hold off for fear of reprisals later on. Our only chance to swing the tenured teachers to our side would be to clarify the issues and win their support at the faculty conference Monday afternoon. That would be the showdown. We needed their support against mandatory testing or we were sunk.

Our core group met and planned strategy. As it turned out, the Principal had a strategy too. He would combine the conference with a retirement party for a popular assistant principal. Spirits would be high. There would be food and wine and the conference would be short. As soon as it ended, the party would begin.

"It's not wise to bring up the ASVAB," Cooney told me. "If our timing is not right, we could lose everything." I knew I would have to find a way to bring it up. I had told too many wavering people that we would confront the Principal at a public forum. If we backed off, they would lose confidence in us.

Meanwhile, we had added several allies, including Armando, a teacher who ran a grassroots organization called *Educadores de Pueblo*. Armando was an army veteran who had created some discord among the staff when he publicly accused most of them of being racists. His support was guaranteed not to win us any centrist friends, but he was firm and he was not easily frightened. I liked him.

At one o'clock, the staff crowded into the cafeteria for our conference. The two key general concerns were saying goodbye to old Irving, and getting to the food before it all disappeared. There was a free floating air of unrest over the crowd as if people were eager to get business over with so they could eat, relax and go home.

Sentimental farewells were made to departing staff. Carol, Mike, and I had placed ourselves in the center where we could be seen and heard. "And before we eat," the Principal said, "let us just run down the rest of the items on the agenda." His momentum began to bog down. People were mumbling and complaining about the delay. A distance opened between the merriment of retirement wishes and the humdrum of daily business. The Principal directed his A.P. for Guidance to discuss ASVAB. I looked at Mike. We were in accord. The time was right. It would be now or never. I jumped in with both feet.

"Can you tell me just why we must give this particular test? Without seeming disrespectful to you, I don't understand why the children must take a test scored by the military, proctored by military personnel..."

The A.P. for Guidance explained that all children in the state would take the test within the next two years and tried to dismiss me.

I pressed on: "Why this test?" I identified myself as a pacifist and a CO. I could not give the exam. I added that I felt that it was racist to give the exam to our kids who had never been approached by any outside civilian employers.

The A.P. grew flustered. "You know *I* selected this exam *personally*...," she said as if I did not realize that my words were an insult to all her hard work.

Our Principal took up the flag. In answer to one of my thrusts he stated, "It's not a violation of your civil rights, Mr. Lynch. It's not even a question."

I pushed. Some of the staff were getting restless. A crowd began to mill around the food. We needed to establish whether giving ASVAB was a policy of the Board or the Superintendent, or simply the Principal's brainstorm. If it were his idea alone, there was a chance he may back off if the terrain got too rough.

"This test is being given on my authority. And nobody else's. Mine alone. Mine and the Assistant Principal for Guidance. With the consent and approval of my cabinet of assistant principals. Does that answer your question?"

It did. Now it was Cooney's turn. Mike demurely suggested that the administration policy might lead to an embarrassment for the Principal and the Board of Education. Cooney hoped that the Principal would be spared embarrassment by offering an alternative program to testing.

There would be none. Now, one of the A.P.'s rose to speak. He gave me a long, hard look, then addressed the crowd.

"It's not just *their* army. It's *our* army. It's *America's* army. I think we should all remember who is protecting *us*."

A smattering of applause greeted this. I stared at the man; he had no more to say. People were making a dash for the food.

So it was over. We had lost.

Or had we? An English teacher took up the petition. People were signing it. Most were women. Now some men began to talk with us. I was embarrassed by the response. Many had not fully realized what was occurring. By the following morning, 53 of the 93 faculty members had signed our petition.

ASVAB had suddenly become just one more of the administration's half-assed decisions, and many teachers would not accept it.

Tuesday, the 31st, was a disaster for the forces of law and order. There were no new programs and hundreds of students spent the day roaming the hallways. Ed and Kathy checked in with us. The Principal had not relented; but he was feeling the heat from both within and outside the school.

As I prepared to go home, I wrote him a letter, requesting that as a matter of conscience and religious belief, that I be assigned to proctor the latecomers in the school auditorium. As I walked to his office, he spotted me first, and rushed toward me. He pulled me aside. This would be our personal reckoning.

Of course, he would respect my wishes. "Someone's trying to sabotage me. My phone has been ringing all day," he said. The Principal is a heavyset young man with a beard. His manner might be called pedantic, but this characteristic is offset by a kind of White Rabbit nervous intensity. "Politicians, parents...everyone wants to know what's going on here. I don't want people thinking I'm some kind of *militarist*. We're not recruiting here. That's the farthest thing from the truth."

So I would not become a scapegoat or example. Maybe there was a chance we would be successful in undermining ASVAB.

The stage was set. I arrived early on Wednesday, the day of ASVAB testing. A

A typical classroom at James Monroe High School on the day the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test was given.

big military bus was already parked outside on the right side of the street. We had been promised a picket line by Armando. There was none. My heart sank. I hoped it was not a portent for what was to follow. The school seemed calm. Quiet. Only my heart was beating fast. No matter what happened, I would remain stoical. It was my last defense.

Suddenly, my chairman appeared coming from the Principal's office. He crooked my arm in his. His face was ashen and he appeared agitated. "We have to talk, Larry. Can we talk? Right now. Not here. In the office."

We went to our office on the fourth floor. The chairman was usually locquacious and merry. Something was up. Something bad. We entered. He waited for some people to leave, and then locked the door behind. He spoke in a hushed and quick confidential tone.

"The Principal's upset. The boss has been crawling the walls since yesterday. In twenty minutes, we'll have 2000 kids in here and he doesn't know whether they'll give the test."

"Who'll give the test. I don't understand."

"Who? Why all those teachers who signed that petition. You know, he respects you for coming out and saying what you believed."

"I don't need his respect." Was I being pumped for information?

"That's beside the point. Not one of those people had the courtesy to tell him what they intended to do."

I knew what they intended to do. They would administer the test. I was not about to let the chairman know. The administration must have hatched a plan to head off this discourteous bunch at the pass.

I was feeling myself relax for the first time in four days.

"It's his own fault," I said, "he could have spoken with us beforehand. He could have dealt with this transactionally. He has a responsibility to our kids. If not him, then who? Maybe us?"

"The poor guy's in a panic. We had an emergency meeting early this morning. There's a crisis situation out there. Are these people acting like responsible adults? This school is like a powder-keg."

"Hey, this is America. One of you should have told him about freedom of choice."

But he had a point. Cooney had worried about making the children upset. So, we had rehearsed a scenario with the kids. We would all calmly define the issues, and explain the alternatives to action. We had to be moral role models. We were the good guys.

We were interrupted by an announcement on the loudspeaker. It was the Principal. He was detailing his plans for peace with honor. No student would be obliged to take the test. The armed forces would not have access to any answer sheets that were not signed by students. Teachers would explain the options to students. Confidentiality and privacy would be respected. Students who did not wish to be tested could report to the auditorium or go home. No program cards would be issued. The computer system was down.

I was elated. I jumped up, but then remembered to stay stoic. I walked to my homeroom. My chairman had one more question.

"Larry, you'll set up the test and then report to the auditorium?"

"You know better than that. I'll take attendance, explain the options, and then go down. You know I wouldn't touch that test with a ten-foot pole."

I passed many teachers in the hall. Even the more conservative teachers had a friendly word and an air of merriment. "You guys are giving me nightmares," one said, "at the conference I thought I'd woken up and it was the sixties all over again. Good luck."

Another approached: "You know I don't agree with a word you said. But I was glad you had the balls to get up and say it in front of everyone. If we don't carry on a dialogue here in school, just where are we going to do it?"

"Did you hear about G..." someone else said, "she refused to sign a receipt for the test. She told the army captain that she did not work for the army. And if they wanted the test given in her homeroom, they would have to provide a soldier to carry it over there. And they did too."

There had been a shift in mood and allegiance. The issue had been redefined as to whether any agency had the right to come into a public school and be given co-operative access to private information. Now it was us, teachers and kids, against the monolithic outsiders: armed forces and administrators.

The soldiers and marines began to appear in the halls now, neatly turned out in blue suits, white shirts and blue ties. Only the two officers in charge wore uniforms. I was a bit shocked. I remembered the big, armed, uniformed men at the Pentagon 15 years ago. These soldiers looked like children, some seemed younger than my students. I suddenly became aware of how the army worked.

I met with my homeroom. I told the kids that I loved them; I explained what the test was about, and why I refused to administer it. Lawrence, a seventeen year old, spoke up: "That's fucked up, Lynch. Ain't nobody wants me. The school don't want me. The Job Corps don't want me. Even my mother don't want me when I turn eighteen. Now why do you suppose the army wants me. I'm splitting."

The other kids followed him out. And the rest of the school began to filter out too. By 9:30, there were 146 in the auditorium with me. Cooney came down. "They told me upstairs that the troops were in retreat. I did an unofficial head count. There are 91 kids staying around for the test."

"They should have listened to us."

"Well, Larry, it's always good for a labor leader to have his predictions come true. It makes it look like you know what you're talking about. I just spoke to the army captain. She told me that the administration had 'guaranteed' that 2000 kids would take the test. Less than a hundred makes the day a total fiasco for her. That's her word. A nice lady. She's upset at the waste of time, personnel, and money. She's got to account for it. They've given this test all over the State, she said. Usually, they come in to speak to the faculty, allay their fears, just to avoid a situation like this one. You know, the funny thing is that she thinks the army is doing the kids a favor. She said that they didn't have to come here. The only reason they came was to give the kids in the south Bronx an equal opportunity to be somebody."

In the end, the armed forces did not feel welcome on Wednesday. One student walked over to a young Marine and asked him why this was going on. "They tell you lies and soup you up and then you go in the Army and you don't get what they say," the young girl told him. "Reagan only wants Blacks and Puerto Ricans go get rid of us."

The young Marine listened politely, and tried to counter her arguments until the girl walked away. He turned to Carol and said in a rather poignant way: "I'd rather spend two years in Beirut, than two days at James Monroe."

Mike Conney, teacher, talking with students who chose not to take the ASVAB test.

Eastern European Peace Activists Face New Repression

By A. W. Jackson

NATO deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles—and the predictable Soviet counter-deployments—has occasioned a sharp escalation in repression of independent peace campaigns throughout Eastern Europe. Increasing numbers of young and working-class people are being swept up in the growing grassroots movement, but they remain highly vulnerable and may not survive their governments' post-deployment jitters. The present moment therefore holds both promise and peril for the international peace movement. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to pursue a genuine dialogue with our Eastern counterparts, but must intensify our support if they are to survive the heightened repression of the new Cold War.

Many differences separate the nations of Eastern Europe and their oppositions, but autonomous peace movements share significant points in common. Independent disarmament campaigns spring from a deep-seated anti-militarism. Activists both inside and independent of the church oppose not just particular weapons systems but the growing militarization of their societies in general. They reject the confrontational logic of the bloc system altogether.

Independent peace activists insist on the "indivisibility" of peace, i.e., the inseparability of peace and democracy. It could hardly be otherwise in the bureaucratic societies of Eastern Europe. While attitudes regarding political opposition vary considerably, to raise an individual voice for peace and organize independently of the state is itself a considerable act of civil disobedience.

Autonomous peace initiatives maintain a consistent unilateral approach to problems of disarmament. Activists in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the two nations currently targeted for Soviet counter-deployments, have solidarized themselves from the outset with western opponents of Cruise and Pershing II yet insist that nothing could justify the placement of additional weapons on their side. The post-deployment landscape clearly holds little room for such uncompromising unilateralism.

In East Germany, where autonomous peace campaigns have achieved the widest popular support, government repression has acquired a newly ominous intensity. While millions demonstrated world-wide on October 22 of last year, State Security men detained hundreds of independent activists to pre-empt a "die-in" tentatively scheduled for five minutes to noon at East Berlin's Alexanderplatz. A further hardening of police tactics became evident following Moscow's announcement October 24 of "additional tactical-operational missile complexes" to counter the NATO weapons.

Hundreds of independents were again rounded up and detained on November 4 to prevent an East/West protest including West German Green Party members at the Soviet and American embassies in East Berlin. Petitions were to have been presented calling on both sides to undertake unilateral steps to halt the arms race. Young activists in Weimar were arrested in response to a grafitti campaign ("SS-20—No thanks!"). Activists in Potsdam were imprisoned for public and workplace attempts at a "moment of silence" for peace. Attempts at a candlelight vigil in Leipzig last November likewise met with repression.

In the most serious escalation of police tactics to date, Barbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe, leading activists in East Berlin's independent Women for Peace, were arrested December 12 and charged with "treasonous divulging of information" under paragraph 99 of the penal code. The two were threatened with potential 12-year jail terms for the "crime" of talking to a British activist researching women in the GDR's peace movement! The notorious paragraph 99 was invoked in a transparent attempt to not only intimidate the independent movement in the GDR but to discourage East/West contact and support.

Bohley and Poppe were released in late January in response to growing international protests culminating in a demonstration at the recent World Peace Council meeting in West Berlin. Peace activists remain in jail in the provinces, however, many without even having been formally charged. They include Patrice and Anke Castillo, Sven Wetzig, Olaf Schubert, Bettina Muntzenberg and Bernd Stracka in Leipzig; Roland Radow, Tobias Philipp, and Vera and Alexander Arnold in Potsdam; and Holm Kirsten, Grit Gerber, Thomas Onisseit, Ulrich Jadke, Andreas Tillmanns, Jorn Luther, Wolfram Hasch, Volker Otto, Alexander Kobylinski, and Jan-Georg Fischer in Weimar. The release of Poppe and Bohley demonstrates the Honecker regime's vulnerability to pressure from the international peace movement. We urge all to send letters and telegrams of protest (and to notify their organizations to do likewise) to: Erich Honecker, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Marx-Engels Platz, Berlin 102, German Democratic Republic.

In Czechoslovakia as in East Germany the recent deployments have unleashed spontaneous political protest and harsh official response. Growing sections of the population appear to be shedding their post-invasion demoralization and independent politics is reviving as a movement in support of peace and disarmament.

Charter 77, while hardly a peace movement in the western sense, has expressed strong support for the goals of the western peace movement. The security services have accordingly zeroed in on those human rights activists who have been most enthusiastic in promoting grassroots East/West dialogue. On July 21, Charter 77 spokesman Ladislav Lis was sentenced to 14 months imprisonment and three years house arrest for his activities.

Many Czechs regard the Lis case as something of a litmus test for the western peace movement. They argue that East/West dialogue can only be sustained if we promote here in the peace movement a concommitant commitment to democratic rights in the East. Western peace groups can register their protest by writing President Gustav Husak, 110 00 Prague 1-Hard, Czechoslovakia.

While police were moving to prevent the embassy protests in East Berlin, Charter 77 activists were rounded up and warned of mandatory ten year sentences for public opposition to the new missiles. But opposition has spread far beyond the limited numbers of committed human rights activists.

The Protestant Church in Czechoslovakia, following the lead of several synods in the GDR, has spoken out strongly against the deployments. Protests among students in Brno, Moravia, have involved many hundreds, while petitions opposing deployment have been circulating in a number of large industrial plants including Prague's largest, the CKD. A petition from the Victorious February engineering works in Hradec Kralove (East Bohemia) vigorously protested not only the new missiles but demanded "the immediate dismantling of all similarly equipped rockets that have been deployed on the territory of our state for some time."

The underground Committee for the Preparation of Free Trade Unions, claiming support in a number of industrial regions, has sent a letter to the central trade union council calling for a public referendum on the proposed deployments, arguing that "such an important question should not be

continued on page 8

A.W. Jackson is a northern California peace activist and co-editor of Across Frontiers, *a quarterly journal promoting East/West wolidarity and presenting news and analysis from the democratic opposition in the East, including the independent peace movements. Single issues are $2.50, annual subscriptions $10.00 from: Across Frontiers, PO Box 112, Palo Alto, CA 94301.*

Grenada—Some Musings in the Wake of the Invasion

By Matt Meyer

March 13 comes and passes, as it did one year ago, with little note from the U.S. peace community at large. One year ago, in a powerful and warning speech at the fourth anniversary of the Grenadian revolution, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop suggested that the U.S. government was planning an invasion. A year passed, and the *New York Times,* in its travel section last month, comments:

There is little visible serious damage to spoil a tourists holiday, and anyone with a sense of adventure who wants to combine a Caribbean interlude with a tour of freshly made history, will find a visit to Grenada exhilerating. But the island, in the wake of "the killing," is having image problems, and tourism is still low. Questions arise: Are there any armed Cuban soldiers left in the hills? Are services and shopping facilities fully operational?[1]

For the North American peace movement, in the wake of a possible invasion of Nicaragua or El Salvador, other questions must be posed. Examining and understanding the full extent of U.S. involvement, both covert and overt, both before and during the invasion, is essential if we are to attempt to analyze its effects.

It is evident that several U.S. initiated attempts at toppling the Bishop government took place since the revolution. Among the most flagrant was Ocean Venture 1981, a naval operation staged in October of that year off the island of Vieques, which had remarkable similarities to the actual Grenadian invasion. The operation involved a mock invasion of "Amber in the Amberdines," a reference to Grenada in the Grenadines.

At the time of the invasion, it seems clear that all maneuvers were planned well in advance. According to a *New York Times* article appearing after the invasion, CIA director William Casey had consultations with the Senate Intelligence Committee.[2] Reports have also suggested that among the first plane load of Americans flown out of the island after the invasion were several CIA operatives, and that plans of a Coard-Austin coup were actually known by U.S. intelligence sources up to two weeks before Bishops death.[3] Even *Newsweek* reported of "an older student [who] assured everyone that help was on the way." Claiming to be a West Point graduate and former Foreign Service officer, a U.S. consul in Laos during the Vietnam war, this older student was said to be "in constant shortwave radio contact with the advancing troops, and seemed to know their moves in advance."[4]

623 Serious questions have also been raised as to the nature of the crowd that liberated Maurice Bishop from his house and marched with him to Fort Rupert on the evening of his assassination. There is some evidence that pro-Western agitators, with possible direct links to the U.S., were involved in it, organized in order to disrupt a possible compromise that was evidently to be reached later that night. *Covert Action Information Bulletin* reports on the crowd indicate that it involved "many participants who were not known Bishop supporters, including counter-revolutionary elements and contingents with anti-communist banners and slogans. This crowd materialized even though some of Bishops' main supporters were already in jail for organizing other demonstrations."[5] Several of his supporters who were not in jail did not even join the rally because of the presence of these elements. It is also not clear from where the original explosions leading to gunfire broke out.

In the weeks following the invasion, widespread psychological propaganda has been directed, both by the Interim government and by U.S. officials, aimed at humiliating Coard and Austin as dupes of Cuba and the Soviet Union.

In any case, the propaganda seeks to enforce a welcoming climate toward the U.S. troops and U.S. advisors. These advisors are and will be the real force behind the newly scheduled elections, from which there are numerous possible candidates, at least five of which are conservative.

Though most of the questions pertaining to full U.S. involvement in the invasion may never be finally answered, and no simple explanations placing full blame either on Coard or Austin or the CIA, are evident, some points which are clear must be kept in mind.

That the vast majority of Grenadian people loved and supported Maurice Bishop is indisputable. Given his continuous and ardent warnings against an iminent U.S. invasion, it simply does not make sense that the Grenadian people were overjoyed at the sight of the Marines. That confusion and disbelief were at a high point after his death is obvious, and feelings of anger and vengeance toward Coard and Austin are understandable. But the news that the U.S. Marines have been welcomed by open arms by the whole of the populace must be seriously questioned. As one Grenadian put it, "the RCM created the opportunity and handed it to Reagan on a silver platter, to come in and recolonize us."

It is important to note that those U.S. investigators who have been able to count Cuban and Soviet presence on the island to the very last bullet have not been able to give a consistant and accurate number as to the level of Grenadian resistance to the invasion. Grenada was *not* heavily militarized and even at major public events only weeks before the coup, few armed officers could be seen. The fact that the 1979 revolution was a peaceful one, and that, like Chile, arms were not widely distributed throughout the populace in defense of the revolution, will lead violent revolutionary theorists to point to these weaknesses as the fatal ones for Bishop and the NJM government.

In fact, it is doubtful that even a heavily armed populace could have significantly responded to the full force of the U.S. invasion. Indeed, it was political participation—and not military indoctrination—that was a weakness and problem of the NJM. Party membership was relatively low, and though many citizens participated in regional and local decision-making structures, a greater incorporation into the workings of the government and Party would have served as an important defense mechanism. Democratic structures, such as Parish and Zonal Councils were in place, but some major questions, including the ones leading to the final split within the NJM, were not brought to the people.

Finally, the name of the game for the people of Grenada was, and is, survival. They survived under the autocratic, mobled rule of UFO-watcher Eric Gairy, and they undoubtedly understand the need and method of surviving under conditions of U.S. invasion. Selling water to the marines and wearing U.S.-produced and distributed "I Love America" tee-shirts does not indicate a love for all the policies of Ronald Reagan. Resistance has become more evident, as a Maurice Bishop and October 19, 1983 Martyrs Foundation has been set up and is receiving widespread support. The U.S. peace movement must remember all of this as we fight those policies and carefully make sure that history is not rewritten as a *New York Times* travelogue for the restless Army recruit.

Matt Meyer is a member of the WRL Executive Committee and Central America Task Force. For more information, contact the Committee for a Free Grenada, P.O. Box 1132, New York, N.Y. 10183.

1. *N.Y. Times,* Sunday, February 5, 1984, p. 11
2. *N.Y. Times,* October 28, 1983
3. *Covert Action Information Bulletin #20,* "U.S. Invades Grenada—Nicaragua Next," Winter 1984 (P.O. Box 50272, Washington DC 20004—$3.00)
4. *Newsweek,* November 7, 1983
5. *C.A.I.B., #20,* p. 11

Eastern Europe

continued from page 6

decided by a group of politicians." The letter points out that Czechs who participate in official peace rallys are in fact "against all mass destruction weapons, whether they are American, West European or Soviet. No one can convince them that only U.S. arms are bad and bring death, and that Soviet missiles are good since they protect us. The truth is that any territory where missiles will be deployed will become the target of a counter-attack from the other side."

The world first learned of an independent peace movement in the USSR when eleven people calling themselves the Group for Establishing Trust Between the USSR and USA held a press conference in Moscow in June of 1982. Eschewing any suggestion of political opposition, they proposed the establishment of nuclear-free zones, a ban on testing, and a variety of creative measures to promote direct exchanges between citizens and the furthering of detente. Government reprisals were immediate, ranging from petty harassment to the incarceration of artist Sergei Batovrin in a psychiatric hospital.

The Trust group has continued its activities and continues to attract new adherents, while similar groups have appeared in Leningrad, Novosibirsk and Odessa. But recent reports from Moscow convey increasing anxiety that the movement is on the verge of succumbing to a new wave of repression.

On October 14, 1983, member Oleg Radzinsky was sentenced to one year imprisonment and five years internal exile for "anti-Soviet agitation" allegedly committed ten years ago. On December 8 member Olga Medvedkova was told she faces trial for "assaulting a police officer" at the Radzinsky trial, which carries a possible three year sentence. Repression continues relentlessly, but Trust Group members attribute Batovrin's release last Spring and the postponement of Medvedkova's trial to western pressure. Support from the western peace movement is absolutely critical if the group is to survive. To protest the arrests of Russian peace activistš, write Konstantin Chernenko and Yuri Zhukov, Chairman, Soviet Peace Committee, 36 Prospekt Mira, Moscow, USSR.

Just as the frenzied military buildups of the superpowers feed off one another, the independent peace movements of the two blocs are also mutually reinforcing. Each serves to delegitimize the ideology of confrontation underpinning the new Cold War, while every advance of the movement on either side weakens the system as a whole. Support for independent initiatives in Eastern Europe, far from burdening the movement with "extraneous" human rights issues, allows the American peace movement to register its opposition to *global* militarism while simultaneously pursuing unilateral initiatives to end the arms race before it ends us.

Larry Gara to Receive WRL Peace Award

Larry Gara, longtime activist and member of the War Resisters League will be honored this year at the annual WRL Peace Award Dinner.

Larry, who teaches American History and Peace Studies at Wilmington College in Ohio, served a three-year prison sentence for refusing to register for the draft during the second world war, and, in 1949 was again convicted for allegedly counseling a young man to refuse to register and served seven months of an 18-month sentence. More recently, Larry put together a slide show called *Active Nonviolence* which has been used extensively by the WRL, has written on the history of war resistance and for many years wrote the "Prison Notes" column in *WIN* Magazine.

The dinner and award ceremony will take place in New York City on Sunday evening, May 6. We know that WRL members from outside the NY metropolitan area won't be able to attend in person, but if you'd like to write a note to Larry that will be given to him the evening of the dinner please send it to the WRL office no later than May 4.

Mid East Study Tour

A study-tour and peace delegation to Jordan, Syria, Israel and the Occupied Territories will depart June 17, 1984 from New York. Organized by the Resource Center for Nonviolence, the group will be headed by Scott Kennedy who has traveled a dozen times to the region. Lasting 18 days, the focus of the tour will be contact with those people and organizations favoring a negotiated settlement based on mutual recognition and creation of a Palestinian state to coexist alongside Israel. Prospects for such a settlement and obstacles to its attainment will also be examined. Some group time and individual free time will enable visits to sites of cultural and religious interest.

For more information contact: Resource Center for Nonviolence, P.O. Box 2324, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. (408) 423-1626.

WRL Statement of Purpose

The War Resisters League affirms that war is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive nonviolently for the removal of all causes of war.

I support this statement and wish to enroll as a member of the War Resisters League.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip ____

Send to: **War Resisters League**
339 Lafayette St.
New York, NY 10012

National Tax Group Sets Up Office

In October of last year, the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee [NWTRCC] set up an office on Long Island with Kathy Levine as its first staff member.

The NWTRCC was formed out of a national war tax resistance conference jointly sponsored by WRL and the Center on Law and Pacifism [CLP] in September 1982 [see WRL News, Nov.-Dec. 1982]. The NWTRCC is a loose federation of over 70 national, regional, and local groups working on war tax resistance. Currently it is developing a national network of local war tax resistance counselors and lawyers. A "War Tax Alternative Fund Packet" was produced in January and is available for $5 from NWTRCC. They have also initiated and have begun promoting a "Telephone Tax Campaign," as well as Tax Day (April 16) activities. A slide show on war tax resistance may be available in the Spring. For information on all this and the National War Tax Resistance Conference to be held in San Francisco, May 26-27, contact NWTRCC, P.O. Box 2236, E. Patchogue, N.Y. 11772, (516) 654-8227.